852 Three days after the birth of a male child, or four days in the case
553 of a daughter, the father and mother invite the relatives to come and rejoice over the new addition to the family. On that day the baby's forehead is shaved in a circle, and he is given a name. The husband's sisters or his other wives choose a name for the first child, and the father himself chooses the names of the others.

551 The name is derived from an event which preceded, attended, or followed the birth. If the mother ever happened to kill a chicken, even by mistake, even in her childhood, her first child is called by the generic name for chickens (noara), or else he will die. If the father or mother have seen two snakes in the same spot, the child will bear the name Ganda. If several previous children died, the newborn takes the name Yéwaya, "he has come." If several reasons for specific names concur, for instance, if he should be named Noara, Ganda, Yéwaya, he is called Ywawa, "one with many names." A child often bears the name of an older sibling with the addition of the adjective Bila, "little, younger." Thus, if the older child is called Tibo, the younger one is called Tibila (Tibo Bila, "the little Tibo fetish"). In other words, names are not given haphazardly. Some names are rather pretty: Zuényendé, "he is shy"; Nongabamba, "she loves them (her parents)"; Danimmamyé, "forget me not." Sometimes the name merely indicates the child's sex: Daore, "male"; Poko, "female"; or else the festive occasion or day of the week when the child was born.

304 Just as names are not given haphazardly, tattoos do not vary without reason. The native tattooing consists basically of three parallel lines on each side of the face, running vertically across the cheek from the temples to the chin, with a fourth line leading from the nose perpendicularly to the other three and crossing the cheek horizontal hatching between them, like a ladder; this is the mark of free men and of chiefs' sons. The three vertical lines may also be interrupted halfway down the cheek by three horizontal stripes, and then continue down to the chin; this is the mark of a child who was born
[844] among the Peul because his older siblings had died and the sorcerer had decreed that his mother should give birth among the Peul. This
[197] tattooing is characteristic of a distinct Mossi tribe, which lives among them but speaks a different language—the Marensé, better known as Marka. If a child has a Yarga /Yarse/ mother or grandmother, he will bear one horizontal stripe on the right cheek in addition to the three vertical lines /on each cheek/; this is the Yarsé tattooing.

776 tangandé in every detail either, for only the village may have a tangandé, and there does not seem to be any magic pact unless the sacrifices offered are considered as such a pact, which does not seem justified. The tangandé-animal is never sacrificed, and no special initiation takes place.

774 761 [775] The closest thing to totemism among the Mossi seems to be their concept of the human soul, and yet it is not, properly speaking, a totem in the sense indicated by these authors. Every man has a soul that lives on after death and takes the name of kyma, while during life it is called siga. Shortly before death it takes the name of toullé /85/ in Ouagadougou or toundo in Koupela, but siga, toundo, kyma [197] are one and the same thing, one and the same principle. According to the Mossi, this soul is an animal, invisible of course, a snake, a crocodile, a deer, a hare. The soul is related to this animal, it belongs to the same family, so that to kill a snake or a crocodile in a village where the soul of the inhabitants is a snake or a crocodile is to kill an inhabitant of the village; every individual related to the snake has a snake in the village to represent thim, and he will die when his soul-animal dies.

774 784 Yet, and this runs counter to the definitions of totemism, the individual expects no aid from this animal, never sacrifices to it, and never kills it himself to renew the kinship pact. A person whose soul is a crocodile is forbidden to kill crocodiles in his own village, but he may kill them elsewhere, although he may never eat them, while he may kill the tangandé animal as long as he does so outside the tangandé, and he may eat it at any time. Some people, when they [766] find a dead soul-animal of their family near their village, render it funeral honors, weep, wail, and bury it as one of their own, but they offer it no gifts and hold no koureé. Generally it is merely covered with earth. The most widespread soul-animals are a kind of snake (bosombodro) and the crocodile. Several families may have the same [502] one, and marriage, although exogamic, is not forbidden between members of these families.

774 754 The soul may leave the body and in fact leaves it often, especially during the night. If children had a good time in a certain place, if they enjoyed themselves at someone's house, the soul returns there at night. This is when the worst is to be feared from the sorcerers; they may seize the soul by surprise, and its unfortunate owner will die.

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1. Actually, these "Arab chroniclers" is simply Es-Sadi, the author of Tarikh-es-Soudan /History of Sudan/, who wrote as late as the seventeenth century. As a matter of fact, it was the Portuguese writer, the great historian and geographer, Jean de Barros, author of l'Asia (1552-53), who was the first to reveal the existence of the Mossi in the sixteenth century. Léon, the African, did not know of them, nor did the Arab geographers and historians of the Middle Ages. Let us add that one should verify exactly in the area whether the Mossah resemble the Mossi other than by name. The matter has become relatively easy since the French occupation of the Cameroons.

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Captain Lambert adds in a note:

"A new question arises here: can one consider the Mossi as being autochthonous to Bornu, or should their long stay in that region be considered as a step in the great migratory movement that, in successive phases, has brought them to the heart of the Niger estuary?

"In the present state of our knowledge, it would be unwise to take a firm position. We shall merely show that the feudal system that characterizes the political constitution of the Mossi can be compared to the system prevalent in Abyssinia. The hierarchical set-up seems to be identical in certain respects; leaders are appointed under analogous conditions, and the election of the Negus is accompanied by a period of anarchy which we also find here and which seems to go back to ancient traditions.

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"It may well be that this goes beyond pure coincidence. While we were in the process of editing a small dictionary of the Mossi language, we took the trouble to find out whether the dialects spoken in Abyssinia were likely to give us some clues on this point. We must admit, however, that the vocabularies of the Galla, Ahmaris /sic/, and Tigré languages that we consulted have not provided us /3/ with convincing arguments. But it is a proven fact today that, from the

viewpoint of ethnographic research, text similarities do not mean very much, and idioms that are not fixed by writing may, within a few centuries, become deformed to the extent of being unrecognizable. While the value of grammatical comparisons is much more important, we have unfortunately had neither the time nor the means to make use of this method. We will, therefore, merely indicate this point of view which, in our opinion, could lead to fruitful observations. On the other hand, missionaries have claimed that the Mossi traditionally would have preserved the symbolic notion of the Christian cross, a fact we have been unable to verify and which, without being impossible a priori, seems unlikely."

After this parenthesis about the distant origins of the Mossi, Captain Lambert continues:

"It is indeed highly probable, and here again, lacking written documents, we have only oral traditions to base our opinions on, that the Mossi people, split up by the impact of a Moslem invasion from the east, must have, through successive waves and losing ground in the opposite direction, spread further toward the west, so that the Mossi-bé (1), who still form several agglomerations in the western

1. Mossi-bé is simply the plural of the word Mossi in Peuhle /Peul/ language.

part of Sokoto and even in the Dounzou circle and who also show striking analogies with the Mossi proper, can also be used as a reference. (Captain Lambert adds in a note: "Among the Mossi-bé we find the circumflex accent which would complete the ethnic tatooing of the Mossi as it is today. This mark rightly belongs to the natives of the left bank of the Niger river up to the angle formed by the Dollol-Maouri.") These agglomerations indicate, in a very approximate fashion, the location of the Mossi empire at the historical period that evidently marks its apogee of power; toward 1350, as we saw /4/ in the Tarikh, Timbuktu was conquered by the sultan of Mossi."

The incident to which Captain Lambert refers here is the conquest of Timbuktu by the Mossi (in 1333 exactly, according to the most advanced calculations) (1), which is mentioned by Es-Sadi in

do, the crutch-handled /poignée en croix/ saber."

Actually, we must admit that we know nothing certain about the Mossi outside of Dagomba. This is what I /12/ clearly stated in my Noir du Yatenga /Blacks of Yatenga/ (1917) (1). The move into

1. See pp. 57 and 58.

Djerma is conjectural, and the question concerning the Mossah would have to be settled by an inquiry made in the Cameroons. At one time I was tempted to connect the Mossi with the races of the south, the Agni-Achanti /Ashanti/, and it seems certain that close relationships exist (2) between the numerical vocabularies of the Voltaic

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2. See Appendix No. I. In addition, a woman called Aoura-Poko plays as important a part in the Baoulé historic tradition as in the Mossi historic tradition. And, although the word for woman is oba, eba, bla in Achanti, Abron, and Baoulé, the Baoulé heroine is called Poko, like Poko (woman) or Pokotoéga (woman of the baobab) of the Mossi tradition.

group and the Agni-Achanti group. But can one base a linguistic comparison on vocabulary alone? It would also have to be proven, grammatically speaking, that the Voltaic linguistic group is very close to the Agni-Achanti group. (3) And this has not yet been done.

3. Delafosse says that there is no special relation between these two groups from a grammatical viewpoint. In a more general manner, Delafosse would now like to believe, as far as Mossi origins are concerned, that Mossi residence in their present country goes back far before the eleventh century A. D. Apparently only a band of pillagers and happy warriors, a princely dynasty came

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In connection with this problem, I shall enumerate below the digits from one to ten in Mossi, in closely related languages (Dagomba, Nankana /Nankanse/), and in derivative tongues (Dagari, Boura, Gourma).

	Mossi	Dagomba	Nankana	Dagari	Boura	Gourma
Un . .	Yémeri	N'Dan	Yendé	Yen	Gni	Iendi
Deux .	Yibou	Niyi	Yi	Ayi	Niyé	Lié
Trois .	Tabo	Nta	Ntan	Ata	Ngata	Ita
Quatre	Nasé	Nahé	Anasé	Ana	Anasi	Ina
Cinq .	Nou	Anou	Anou	Anou	Nganou	Imou
Six . .	Ayobé	Ayobo	Ayobé	Ayobe	Vendenta	Ilouoba
Sept .	Yopoï	Ayopoué	Ayopoué	Ayopoué	Nantanasé	Illélé
Huit .	Ani	Ani	Ani	Ani	Nané (ou Nani)	Ni
Neuf .	Aoué	Aoué	Aoué	Voué	Noo	Ia
Dix . .	Piga	Pia	Pia	Pié	Pi	Piga

174 2. The second question is a priori less difficult to solve. It concerns the time when the Yarsé or Ouangarbé settled in Mossi territory.

Marc and Moulins do not agree on this score.

Speaking of Mossi territory, Marc says (op. cit., p. 142), "It was most probably its reputation as a peaceful land that lured the Mandé-Dioula /Diula/ or present-day Yarsé about the middle of the eighteenth century. According to the native traditions summarized by Binger, some Mandé-Dioula who were established in Ségou and who had taken a stand against N'Golo, victor over Sogonè, fled in fear of retaliation after the death of Sogonè in 1754 and came to settle among the Mossi. N'Golo attempted to pursue them, and twice came and attacked the Mossi. Both expeditions failed, and N'Golo died in the course of the second one in 1787."

/465/ According to Marc, the Yarsé would thus be Mandé-Dyoula /sic/ from Ségou who settled in Mossi territory in the eighteenth century. Moulins has quite a different idea.

The Mossi grow tobacco in fields around their
248 homesteads, where they also cultivate their most important cash crops,
249 cotton and indigo, which are used in the manufacture and dyeing of cotton cloth.

INTRODUCTION

136 The wild fauna of Mossi country include several species of antelope, deer, monkeys, rabbits, snakes, and wild pigs. Elephants roam the beds of rivers and streams and often destroy cultivated fields, while lions and hyenas distress the people by attacking livestock. The pools and rivers of Mossi country are inhabited by turtles, crocodiles, and various species of scaled and scaleless fish. Chickens, muscovy ducks, and half-domesticated guinea fowl are the most valuable species of birds.

231 The Mossi have long been famous for their splendid donkeys and
[492] horses. Donkeys are sometimes ridden, but they are used primarily as
[439] beasts of burden. Horses are important for military and ceremonial purposes and for export to the tsetse-fly zones to the south. The Mossi raise two main types of cattle: a zebu-like animal in the northern regions and a
[439] dwarf variety in the south. These animals are raised primarily for their milk and for export, and are seldom killed for meat until they are fairly old. Goats and sheep provide the main source of meat. Hog-raising is not wide-
[771] spread, and seems to be declining in importance with the increased ob-
[178] servance of Islamic food taboos, which is on the uprise even among people who are still pagans.

135 The subsoil of Mossi country is not well known, but so far there have been no major discoveries of mineral deposits. The only known gold field
[301] remained unworked in aboriginal times. The Mossi do not like to wear
[325] gold ornaments, preferring jewelry worked from imported copper and
[439] silver. The northern Mossi worked their local iron in aboriginal times, but those in the south obtained this metal from caravan traders.

175 The nineteenth-century reports of Barth and other European travelers
439 indicate that the Mossi conducted a rather extensive foreign trade. At least
[443] six caravan routes passed through their territory, and traders such as the Hausa and Mandingo visited the important Mossi trading centers at Yako, Pouitenga, and Ouagadougou, where they exchanged Saharan and forest products for Mossi livestock and cloth.[3]

101 The Mossi belong to the Voltaic culture area, a name given by Delafosse to the regions drained by the Black, Red, and White Voltas and their tributaries. The area embraces parts of Mali, the Ivory Coast, Dahomey, the Upper Volta, and northern Ghana.[4] It includes a vast congeries of peoples such
[197] as the Dagomba, Mamprusi, Dagari, Birifo, Senufo, Gurmanche, Gurunsi, Lobi, Bobo, Tallensi, Konkomba, Dogon, Somba, Fulse, and Ninisi, all of whom speak languages belonging to the Gur or Moshi-Grunshi group of

11: Skinner E-5 (1955-1957) 1964
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the Niger-Congo family of African languages.[6] Like the Mossi, these groups are primarily horticultural; cereals are their main crops, and they cultivate yams where conditions permit. Their social organization takes both patrilineal and matrilineal forms. The veneration of ancestors lies at the core of their religious beliefs, but the existence of an otiose high god whose name contains the root *We* (*Ouennam, Win, Wene,* etc.) is also recognized. There are also tutelary spirits, the chief one being a female earth deity associated with We and called *Tenga* (also occurring as *Teng, Tena,* and *Ten*). The *Tengsobadamba,* who are priests or custodians of the earth shrines, are found among all the groups in the Voltaic family, and they often share leadership with more secular chiefs called *Naba, Na,* or *Nab.* Most of the ruling clans of the Voltaic groups claim common ancestry and acknowledge the same totems.[8]

The only glaring dissimilarity between these Voltaic peoples, and the one with which this study is primarily concerned, lies in the realm of political organization. Some are united into large kingdoms, while others form small acephalous groups. Delafosse makes the following generalizations about the smaller groups:

> It may be said of these people that, as a whole, they have remained quite primitive. With a few exceptions, they have not reached any significant level of political development; as a rule, they have not progressed beyond family unity. Although they neighbor on well-organized and powerful states such as the Mossi empires and the kingdoms of the Gourma and Bergo, which are inhabited by populations of the same ethnic group, they have derived little benefit from this proximity; some of them have been absorbed as subjects or vassals by these states, while others have remained on the outside, and seem to have but one purpose, the forceful preservation of their fierce but sterile independence. . . . Attachment to the land seems to be the only solid and fecund institution in their chaotic society.[7]

Rattray believes that the development of such highly organized political systems as those of the Mossi, Dagomba, and Mamprusi may be traced to "small bands of strangers." He thinks that the outsiders were better armed, better clothed, and familiar with the rudiments of Islam, and that since they knew about the institution of kingship, they were able to "superimpose upon the primitive tribes among whom they settled a new and unheard-of political conception, namely the idea of territorial and secular leadership in place of the immemorial institution of a ruler who was the high priest of a totemic clan and dealt only in spiritual sanctions." Nevertheless, Rattray is not certain that the Voltaic groups would not have evolved complex political systems if they had been left to themselves. He makes the significant statement that if the subjugation by the bands of strangers had not

11: Skinner E-5 (1955-1957) 1964
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8. Cf. Marc, p. 156.
9. Cf. Fortes, pp. 258–71.
10. Skinner, "The Diffusion of Islam," pp. 659–69.
11. Tauxier, *Le Noir du Soudan*, pp. 585–86.
12. Dim Delobson, p. 205.
13. Crozat, p. 4820.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 4822.
15. *Ibid.*, p. 4835.
16. Binger, I, 452.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 456.
18. *Ibid.*, pp. 452–56.
19. Archives, Document 15G-190 (1897–98). Instructions left to Captain Scal by Destenave, June 1897.

CHAPTER NINE

1. Marc, p. 17.
2. Barth, III, 595. Although it is possible that the Wolof prince Bemoy did hear about the Mossi, he was mistaken about the name of their ruler. Interestingly enough, the title "Ogane" is not too dissimilar from Hogon, the title of head men among the Dogon (Habe or Kado) whom the Mossi had pushed into the hills of Bandiagara. Cf. Bascom, p. 24.
3. Barth, III, 606.
4. Bowdich, p. 180.
5. Dupuis, Appendix CVII.
6. Clapperton, II, 323.
7. Barth, III, 643–49. As cited earlier, Barth states that the Portuguese got reports about the Mossi in the year 1533 "from the wrong side, namely from Benin." This may not have been altogether "the wrong side," however, for Barth gives us data on caravans from Mossi country to Sansane Mango in Togoland that indicate how news about the Mossi might have traveled from the interior to Benin city in Nigeria.
8. Koelle, p. 6. Dixon, who seems to have been one of the few captured Mossi sold to the West, reports: "Mose is west of Gurma, east of Andemtenga, where a different language is spoken. Mose is also two days journey from Butmera, where the same language is spoken; four days from Bulega [Bolga tanga], the language still the same, and confederate with Kambonse, i.e. Asante; two days from Yaongo, with still the same language; six days from Bosanse which is at enmity with Mose and where people bore their lips, and often tie them together with grass, and whose language is different from Mose; four days from Busma also a different language, and in which country there is a very high mountain (Tanga) from which those who ascend never come back again [probably a reference to Plimpikou, the Mossi holy mountain]; three or four weeks from Kambonse, i.e. Asante. Kupeala is four days from Wardyga [Ouagadougou] the Mossi capital, whither the king of Asante often sent presents; and one month from Salak [Salaga], an Asante town, where they bring kola nuts."
9. Marc, p. 30.
10. Great Britain, Parliamentary papers xlvi, 1882.
11. The people of Nobere, Manga, and other districts surrounding Bere have traditions about Krause, who is remembered as the first white-skinned person ever seen in those parts. The color of his skin was attributed to the fact that, "like the fish," he had come out of the sea.
12. Krause, pp. 92 ff. Although there is no evidence to this effect in the literature, it appears certain that Mossi government officials knew of Krause's visit. They treated most travelers in the following manner: "After entering a town the party is given in charge of a man usually termed 'housemaster.' It is his duty to exercise surveillance over the action of the stranger and to report the result to the authorities. . . . The trader conducts his business through his 'housemaster,' who usually makes a handsome gain by acting as middleman (G. E. Ferguson, quoted in Wolfson, p. 199).

12:Skinner E-4,5 (1955-1957) 1962
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market and set up their small tables to display all types of goods from trinkets to single lumps of sugar. And the more numerous young men, who have no goods but have money in their pockets, go to the leaf-covered sheds, place their weapons on top of them, and take seats from which to view the passing parade. Imperceptibly, the hum in the market increases as people find their places and greet one another with *Ne Raga*, the market greeting, until by 11:30 A.M. the whole market reverberates with sounds of drumming, cries of vendors, and the shrill voice of water hawkers and juvenile vendors. Now the market is in full swing.

From midday until about 3:30 P.M., the Mossi market is a sea of humanity—talking, laughing, arranging rendezvous, quarreling, selling, buying, parading, and (where youngsters are concerned) often crying for want of money to buy a desired object. The return of migrants lends additional color and excitement to the market as these young people walk about in their new clothes, encouraging the drummers to sing louder praises, the maidens to feel jealous of the clothes of the migrants' female relatives, the former migrants to reminisce about the days when they too had bright new clothes, and the young boys to dream of going off one day to obtain the things they need.

Men, noting that their female relatives are spending too much time looking over the wares of a vendor of European products or of the kola-nut seller, wander over ostensibly to help in the purchase but really to prevent love affairs. The failure to observe such a precaution may be the cause of the shouting a man hears in the distance, and off he hurries to see whether a lineage brother or a friend may need his aid. He may either get into the battle himself, or aid the Raga Naba and the other elders to chase the battlers out of the market place, or to take them to the chief. This may indeed restore some peace and good fellowship to the market.

Elders, now more interested in beer than in other pleasures, pass the heat of the market day under the beer sellers' shed. From time to time one of them may be interrupted by a young man bringing him three kola nuts, one or two of which are immediately broken and given to friends. However, when an oldster, whether a drinking pagan or a Moslem teetotaler, sees or overhears a young man buying four kolas, he may frown or smile in the knowledge that mischief is afoot. Loud-voiced predictions of the consequences of evil-doing may suddenly disturb the merrymakers as American missionaries speaking in perfect More (the language of the Mossi) appear and harangue the market people. Then, as suddenly, the *Americadamba* depart in their large cars, and the curious pagans, amused Catholics or hostile Moslems who had gathered to hear the gospel return to